

Dec. 6, 2002 – Privatizing takes toll on WSMR, local area

To the editor,

The privatization of White Sands Missile Range is under consideration once again. This is not the first time. Through the years, many functions at WSMR that used to be performed by military and civilian personnel were contracted out, even though this was shown to be more costly.

Having a good mix of contractor, military and civilian has its advantages, but privatization of WSMR has a human dimension. It was the commitment of civil service employees who built a life and a career here and dedicated themselves to the mission that made White Sands Missile Range the jewel in the crown of our nation's defense that it is today.

Corporations come and go. They lose their contracts to lower bidders. The work is subcontracted to other companies, and they are taken over in the maneuvering of Wall Street shenanigans, leaving their employees in the dust.

WSMR has always had a core of career employees who made the mission of WSMR their life's work. They had a commitment and pride in their jobs, staying the course as contractors came and went. Their genius and steadfast fealty to the mission of WSMR grew it to where it is today. A walk down the Hall of Fame at the WSMR Museum tells the story of just a fraction of those who made significant contributions to the missile and space age. Our children grew up here, went to school and some stayed to continue their parent's work.

While corporations are fixated on the bottom line, those who made WSMR their life's work provided the continuum and thread of stability. Those who were there at the beginning and are there today, believe it is in the best interest of White Sands Missile Range to continue having the leadership and management in the hands of the military and civilian personnel. We want to keep jobs in New Mexico so that our children can be educated and stay here.

There is a permanent pay off by those civilian and military employees who worked and retired here, helping to build not only the range but the towns they live in as well. They have provided a base of stability and served as mayors, city council members and community leaders. Because of the education and skills they acquired in a myriad of occupations, they have shared them in their communities and made them better places to live.

The idea of privatizing a vital resource such as White Sands Missile Range and stripping it of all those who have committed their lives to its development and growth should not be allowed to happen, and I hope that our congressional delegation will actively participate and ask the hard questions as to what the benefit will be to our nation's defense, the cost to our economy, the cost to our state and, most importantly, the cost to the people who live here.

Francis F. Williams

Las Cruces resident